

From: Lois Laczko December 17, 2008 1:10:32 PM  
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To: SimsburyCT\_EconMin  
Cc:

ADOPTED

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MINUTES  
November 13, 2008  
REGULAR MEETING

I. CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Commission was called to order at 7:30 AM in the Main Meeting Room of the Simsbury Town Offices. Chairman Thomas Frank and Commission members Mark Deming, Lou George, Nancy Haase, Alan Levesque, Alan Needham, Derek Peterson, Chuck Minor and Kevin Crimmins were present. Rick Bazzano was also present.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - August 14, 2008, September 11, 2008, October 16, 2008 and October 24, 2008

Commissioner Levesque made a motion to approve the August 14, 2008 minutes as written. Alan Needham seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to approve the September 11, 2008 minutes as written. Alan Levesque seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Minor made a motion to approve the October 16, 2008 minutes as written. Alan Needham seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion to approve the October 24, 2008 Special Meeting minutes as written. Alan Needham seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

III. APPROVAL OF PROPOSED REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION IN 2009, AND DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE CHANGE IN MEETING TIME FROM 2ND THURSDAY EARLY A.M. TO 2ND THURSDAY AT 7 P.M.

After some discussion, the EDC members decided that the meeting schedule would be appropriate to have February's meeting on the 5th and April's

meeting on the 16th. All other meeting dates on the tentative schedule were fine.

Commissioner Levesque made a motion to approve the tentative regular meeting dates for the year 2009 as amended. Commissioner Haase seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

The Commission also discussed changing the meeting time to the evenings. Most Commission members stated that the early morning meetings were more convenient for them. Chairman Frank stated that the meetings would remain in the morning. Commissioner Crimmins suggested that if the EDC were to have a special meeting, they might want to consider having them in the evening.

#### IV. CHARRETTE STATUS REPORT AND PROBABLE NEXT STEPS

Chairman Frank stated that the Charrette Sub-committee has met several times. At their last meeting, they decided on 2 of the 3 firms, although they still had several questions for them. Their questions had to do with cost reductions and if the principle of the firm would be involved in the Charrette process. Mr. Peck has received the answers to these questions and the sub-committee will be meeting next week to discuss this information. The objective at this meeting will be for the Sub-committee to put together a recommendation regarding one firm and to also make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Peck stated that the third firm that was not selected by the Charrette Sub-committee also wanted to submit answers to the Sub-committee's questions, which they have done. He stated that all of the responses to the questions have been received and will be sent to the Sub-committee members today. He stated that, although some of the responses are better than others, it will be up to the Sub-committee to decide which is best.

Regarding funding, Chairman Frank stated that a Charrette, even with cost reductions, will be expensive. The Chairman of the Board of Finance has made his opinion known that he strongly suggests that the Charrette go into the next normal budget cycle. Chairman Frank stated that most everyone now agrees with him because of these hard economic times.

Commissioner Peterson questioned if the Board of Selectmen has taken a vote yet stating that they are in favor of a Charrette or not. Chairman Frank stated that, at the last meeting, the EDC voted to write a letter asking that the Board of Selectmen establish their point of view. He stated that the letter was not responded to or acknowledged. Mr. Peck stated that the Board of Selectmen does have concerns regarding the cost of the Charrette process; they may be waiting to respond until they know the cost.

Mr. Peck stated that the Board of Finance will be meeting next week to discuss upcoming budget issues. The public is invited to attend.

Commissioner Needham questioned that if the Charrette is part of the next budget cycle, what this would do to the timeline. Mr. Peck stated that there is a lot of preparation work and background work that can be done in the meantime until the public process begins.

Commissioner Peterson questioned if the Board of Finance would need to know the Board of Selectmen's position prior to them looking into if the Charrette can be financed. Mr. Peck stated that there is a proper order of the process in order to go forward. The Charrette Sub-committee will make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen; the Selectmen would then take a vote and make a recommendation to the Board of Finance.

Regarding funding, Commissioner Haase stated that money there was found in the budget that could possibly be used for the Charrette. She stated that they should be able to move forward because of these funds. Mr. Peck stated that the budgetary process for this year will be very tough. He stated that he is not sure if these funds will stay available.

Commissioner George stated that the Chamber of Government Affairs had a meeting, which he attended. They believe that because of the Charrette, Simsbury has become stagnant as a Town. Mr. Peck stated that projects continue to move forward; no project has been held up because of the Charrette. Commissioner George stated that the Zoning Regulations have been held back in order to see what the Charrette does. Mr. Peck stated that the Zoning Regulations are currently on their third revision. They have now come to the end of the money that was allocated for those revisions. He stated that they are not being held up; they are moving forward.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that if the EDC lets any group or individual identify the Charrette as a cause of blockage, he feels that this would be a mistake. He feels that if anything is being held up, it is because of the economy, not the Charrette. Commissioner George stated that the Zoning Regulations started before the Charrette issues came up; he considers this a delay because there have been Center Zone regulation ideas that have been agreed upon for the past five years. Commissioner George stated that the Chamber has raised these concerns and he feels that the EDC should listen to those concerns. He stated that he is against a Charrette that would develop into a form-based code, although he does not have any issues with a Charrette to determine what the people want.

Regarding the next steps, Mr. Loomis, Chairman of the Planning Commission, stated that the Charrette Sub-committee will meet next week and will make a

recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Selectmen can then make a recommendation to the Board of Finance. He stated that the special funding mechanism can be done if funding is available to enable it. When and if the series of approvals are made, work can begin now for the next fiscal year; plans and schedules can be worked on once approval are given. Commissioner Peterson stated that he would agree with this as long as actions are not being duplicated; things should not be done in-house if it is something that the consultants will be doing.

#### V. FURTHER DISCUSSION OF REDESIGN OF THE EDC PORTION OF THE TOWN WEB SITE

Rick Bazzano stated that the EDC had requested a representative from Virtual Town Hall to come to their November meeting. He introduced Millard Rose to the Commission and stated that he was there to discuss a new EDC product.

Millard Rose, President of Virtual Town Hall, stated that they work with over 20 Connecticut communities, many of which are in the Northeast. Virtual Town Hall (VTH) focuses on government websites. He stated that they have built an EDC product that is different from their current product; it is more marketing driven. Mr. Rose stated that VTH will be launching this product by December 2008. He stated that this new technology is not currently on the website, although it will be made available for the whole Town to use, not just the EDC portion of the site. It will include site maps, page structure widths and much more; larger formats are also available.

Mr. Rose stated that he has looked at the various components that the EDC had, both from the review from the content that he has just discussed as well as the document that the EDC had sent him regarding their structural and content changes. He stated that these are all things that are readily available from VTH. He stated that he would like to come back to discuss how each point would be addressed and the options that are available, as well as the costs. He stated that VTH could accommodate all of the needs of the EDC.

Mr. Rose stated that the Town of Simsbury is considering a redesign of their website. If this happens, all portions of the website can start from scratch if they would like. The EDC can also split out from the Town to create their own presence.

Commissioner Crimmins stated that he would like to see a proposal regarding the range of changes that the EDC can make at no cost to them within the current structure. He also questioned what Mr. Rose meant by marketing driven. Mr. Rose stated that, for example, testimonials can now be posted

in text, which is very straight forward. He stated that this has market value, but no stream presentation. He stated that marketing driven is the power of production that is being put forward. He stated that this would depend on the Town's mission and budget.

Commissioner Deming questioned who would maintain the site. Mr. Rose stated that this would be a local decision. Chairman Frank stated that this project started over one year ago when the EDC decided that their portion of the Town's website should be improved. As a Commission, they had ideas to make the website better, along with input from the Metro Hartford Alliance. He stated that they are still trying to determine what the ideal EDC website is. Chairman Frank stated that if there is not any money available, they can determine what can be done within the current contract with VTH. If the EDC is serious about having a first rate portion of website, they will have to spend some money. If so, they will need to consider putting this into the budget. Chairman Frank stated that they have discussed several times who will do the work. No one on the EDC has the time to do this.

Commissioner Peterson stated that it would be very helpful if VTH could make suggestions and let them know what other Economic Development Commissions in other Towns are doing. They can then prioritize and determine the cost from that. He stated that because he works better visually, he would like Mr. Rose to make a power point presentation. Chairman Frank stated that Commissioner Crimmins, at the last meeting, suggested having a special meeting in order to work on prioritizing and making changes to the website.

Commissioner Haase stated that they are looking at several things: affordability of taking the next technical steps; and content and the procedures in place in order to get the content and keep the work going forward. She feels that an internal check of what can be done with the resources they have is needed. She feels that they also need to have a long-term process in place. Commissioner George stated that updating the website's information becomes the issue; this is where they seem to stumble.

Mr. Rose stated that another service that VTH offers is Virtual Web Master Services. This is a new service that helps Towns that do not have the time to keep their websites updated. Information or instructions can be sent to VTH and they will do the work for the Town.

Chairman Frank stated that the EDC would like improvements to their portion of the Town's website. VTH has services that can be accessed. He suggested that Mr. Rose come back to make a presentation to show what is possible on a no-cost basis and also on a cost basis. Then the EDC will be able to put together a budget proposal for the Town. Mr. Rose stated he

would be prepared to make this presentation sometime in December.

Chairman Frank left the meeting at 8:25 a.m. Commissioner Deming chaired the rest of the meeting.

#### VI. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RENEWAL OF CERC SITEFINDER MEMBERSHIP WHICH EXPIRED ON NOVEMBER 7, 2008

Commissioner George stated that last year was the first year that the EDC were members of CERC. He stated that it was inexpensive to have CercFinder and it was very beneficial to landowners in Town.

Mr. Peck stated that this is a simple process. Because of the economy, things are stagnant and not many changes were made to CercFinder, although many brokers make changes themselves; not all changes go through Mr. Peck. The EDC has discussed in the past sending out notices to the business community regarding CercFinder, although this was never done. Mr. Rose stated that VTH does not envision, in the near term, providing a Cerc-type of service.

Mr. Peck recommended that the EDC continue with Cerc.

Commissioner Crimmins made a motion that the Economic Development Commission recommends to the First Selectmen that the Town's membership with CERC be renewed for one year. Commissioner George seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

#### VII. HARTFORD BUSINESS JOURNAL: METRO HARTFORD TRENDS REPORT

Mr. Peck stated that Metro Hartford Trends came out with their annual report. They are asking Towns if they would like to advertise in their next report. Mr. Peck stated that the cost of advertising ranges from \$690 for one-sixth of a page and \$1490 for three-fourths of a page. He stated that this is very costly and does not recommend this advertising for the EDC.

#### VIII. AIRPORT ACQUISITION STATUS REPORT

Commissioner Crimmins stated that a copy of the feasibility study is up on the Town's website. He stated that there were two public comment meetings held several weeks ago. He stated that there were a number of concerns expressed regarding the financial data that was used in the report and not using accurate numbers and data.

Regarding the next steps, Commissioner Crimmins stated that the draft study will be reviewed and there will be a final draft within the next several

months, although the preliminary recommendation is not strong. The report states that if economic development is a driver for the Town's interest, a recommendation cannot be made for this, although there is not enough data to make a recommendation against this.

Mr. Peck stated that the next phase can be pursued if the Town wants more information in more detail and would like to move forward.

The Commission discussed the extension of the runway of 500', although this extension would not allow bigger aircraft to land at this airport.

#### IX. NEW BUSINESS

Nancy Anstey distributed the Connecticut's Farmington Valley Visitor's Guide for 2009 to the Commission members.

#### X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner George motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 am.  
Commissioner Haase seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.